

# Theory of Knowledge

## *Course syllabus*

Winter Semester 2019/2020

**LAS:** Module – “Theory of Knowledge” (6 ECTS)

**Philosophy:** “Vorlesung” in Theoretische Philosophie (3 ECTS). ‘Studienleistung’ only.

**Times and rooms:**

Lecture: Wed 12:15-14:00h, AU HS1

|             |       |                   |
|-------------|-------|-------------------|
| Workgroups: | WG 1: | Fri 8-9h, BT 205  |
|             | WG 2: | Fri 8-9h, Ph HS3  |
|             | WG 3: | Fri 9-10h, BT 205 |
|             | WG 4: | Fri 9-10h, Ph HS3 |

**Instructor:** PD Dr. Tobias Henschen

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Office hours: Mondays 16-17h, AU 01071

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**Course website:** ILIAS (password: Cartesius).

The website will feature important course material like scans of assigned readings, exercise sheets and lecture slides. Make sure that you join the course, and that you adjust your settings so as to be able to receive notifications and messages. Emails will be sent via the ILIAS messaging system.

## Overview and goals

The course is part of the systematic reflections on knowledge and science within the LAS-Core. It analyzes the traditional understanding of knowledge as true justified belief, the problems inherent to that understanding (e.g. epistemic skepticism). The course also introduces to elementary logic (propositional and predicate calculus) and discusses the distinction between different types of linguistic meaning (especially semantic and pragmatic) and between the different types of inference based on them.

Learning goals:

- Become acquainted with the most fundamental questions in epistemology;
- Become acquainted with the basics of propositional and predicate logic;
- Learn how to “read, write, and speak”, i.e. to read philosophical texts thoroughly (to follow and to critically reflect every step of the argument); to compose pieces of written work that develop sound and valid arguments; and to debate problems that are intellectually challenging in a fair and detached manner.

## Requirements

The **examination** (*Prüfungsleistung*) in the course consists of 5 exercise sheets and one written exam.

Exercise sheets (20% of the final grade): There will be a total of 10 exercise sheets – 5 on philosophy (4 on epistemology, 1 on philosophy of language), and 5 on logic.

The exercise sheets on philosophy come in two parts. The first part consists of exercises that are meant to help you improve your reading ability; they refer to central passages of the mandatory readings that will be discussed in the lectures. The second part lists questions that can be dealt with in a reflection paper.

A reflection paper is a written assignment of 700 – 1000 words that is more formal than, say, a diary entry, but less formal than a research article. First person writing (using personal pronouns like “I”, “me”, “my”, “our”) is appropriate for this type of assignment, but it does not simply summarize what you have read or express a free flow of thoughts. It may rely (but should not fully depend) on personal experience. It should be inspired by and needs to quote from the mandatory reading that is the topic of the respective exercise sheet. It should analyze a philosophical question in a thoughtful and coherent manner.

The exercise sheets on logic comprise exercises that are meant to help you practice your ability to avoid logical fallacies, to manipulate symbols, to understand the syntax and semantics of formal languages, and to understand the possibilities and limitations of formal logic.

Of the 10 exercise sheets, you will need to pass at least 5: at least two on philosophy and at least two on logic. In order to pass an exercise sheet on philosophy, you will need to get at least  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the attainable points for the exercises in part I **or** pass a reflection paper. In order for you to pass a reflection paper, your paper will need to satisfy minimal criteria relating to your engagement with the topic, the structure of your paper, and your style of writing. In order to pass an exercise sheet on logic, you will need to get at least  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the attainable points. If you have passed 5 exercise sheets, their combination will be graded by 1.0. Failed exercise sheets cannot be revised.

Exercise sheets will be made available via ILIAS about a week before the lecture. Exercise sheets on philosophy will need to be submitted via ILIAS (no later than immediately) before the lecture; exercise sheets on logic will need to be submitted via ILIAS (no later than immediately) before the first work group meeting (on Fridays at 8h).

Written exam (80% of the final grade): The written exam will take place on February 12. It will very much resemble the exercises of the exercise sheets on philosophy and logic (though not the questions that can be dealt with in reflection papers). The best way to prepare for the written exam is to work (independently or in groups) on all 10 exercise sheets in advance of the lectures (or at least the work group meetings). To pass the written exam, it needs to be graded 4.0 or better.

To complete the **pass/fail** requirements (*Studienleistung*) in this course you need to attend work group meetings and actively participate in the discussion. In the work groups, students are meant to discuss solutions to the exercises of the exercise sheets, but also to continue and intensify discussions initiated in the lectures. Students may miss up to 2 workgroup meetings without explanation or being sanctioned. It is the student's responsibility to make up work for the missed meetings. Absences from more than 2 meetings will require a medical certificate and compensatory work (e.g. a short essay). In this case, please contact your tutor. Otherwise you risk failure of the course or other sanctions.

The re-sit will take place during the official UCF resit period (April 3 – 30). It will be more difficult than the (regular) written exam and cover the material of the whole semester. You will have to do the resit if your final grade is 5.0.

## **Important formalia**

Cell phones and social media must not be used during lectures or work group meetings. It will be absolutely necessary that you remain quiet during lectures and work group meetings. Otherwise you and your fellow students won't be able to follow. If you have questions raise your hand.

You are welcome to send me an email if you have questions or want to make suggestions. If your email is of interest to all course participants, I will respond to them in the lecture.

The UCF policy on plagiarism and cheating applies to the exercise sheets and the final exam. Failing to indicate sources and correctly reference all ideas and quotes from other authors or your work in other assignments will result in failing the course component and possibly the course as a whole. Cases of suspected plagiarism will be reported to the Examination Board.

SCHEDULE (PRELIMINARY)

| General topic          | Date      | Format           | Specific topic                            | Mandatory readings*  |
|------------------------|-----------|------------------|---|--|
| LAS intro              | Wed 10/23 |                  |   |  |
|                        | Wed 11/06 |                  |   |  |
| Introduction           | Wed 11/13 | L                | Topics, goals, requirements, formalia     | Plato, <i>Republic</i> (excerpt)   |
| Epistemology           | Wed 11/20 | L                | Epistemic skepticism                      | Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> I+II                                       |
|                        | Fri 11/22 | WG 1-4           | Exercise sheet 1                          |  |
|                        | Wed 11/27 | L                | Cartesian program                         | Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> III+VI                                     |
|                        | Fri 11/29 | WG 1-4           | Exercise sheet 2                          |  |
|                        | Wed 12/04 | L                | K = JTB                                   | Plato, <i>Theaetetus</i> (excerpts); Russell, <i>Truth and Falsehood</i> |
|                        | Fri 12/06 | WG 1-4           | Exercise sheet 3                          |  |
|                        | Wed 12/11 | L                | Induction                                 | Hume, <i>Enquiry</i> , section 4   |
| Fri 12/13              | WG 1-4    | Exercise sheet 4 |   |  |
| Logic I                | Wed 12/18 | L                | Sets, relations, arguments                | Halbach, <i>The Logic Manual</i> , Chapter 1                             |
|                        | Fri 12/20 | WG 1-4           | Exercise sheet 5                          |  |
|                        | Wed 01/08 | L                | Propositional logic: syntax and semantics | Halbach, <i>The Logic Manual</i> , Chapter 2.                            |
|                        | Fri 01/10 | WG 1-4           | Exercise sheet 6                          |  |
|                        | Wed 01/15 | L                | Propositional logic: formalization        | Halbach, <i>The Logic Manual</i> , Chapter 3.                            |
|                        | Fri 01/17 | WG 1-4           | Exercise sheet 7                          |  |
| Philosophy of language | Wed 01/22 | L                | Meaning                                   | Frege, "Sense and Reference" (excerpts).                                 |
|                        | Fri 01/24 | WG 1-4           | Exercise sheet 8                          | Grice, "Meaning"   |
| Logic II               | Wed 01/29 | L                | Predicate logic: syntax                   | Halbach, <i>The Logic Manual</i> , Chapter 4.                            |
|                        | Fri 01/31 | WG 1-4           | Exercise sheet 9                          |  |
|                        | Wed 02/05 | L                | Predicate logic: semantics                | Halbach, <i>The Logic Manual</i> , Chapter 5.                            |
|                        | Fri 02/07 | WG 1-4           | Exercise sheet 10                         |  |
| Final exam             | Wed 02/12 | Exam             | <i>Written exam</i>                       |  |

\* Cf. the course website or the exercise sheets for more specific statements of page numbers or sections.

## Bibliography

- Descartes, R. (1641). *Meditations on First Philosophy*. In *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*. Vol. I. Transl. by E. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross. Cambridge: CUP, 1911.
- Frege, G. (1948). "Sense and Reference." *The Philosophical Review* 57(3): 209-230.
- Grice, P. H. (1957). "Meaning." *The Philosophical Review*, 66(3): 377-388.
- Halbach, V. (2010). *The Logic Manual*. Oxford: OUP.
- Hume, D. (1748). *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. Ed. by T. Beauchamp. Oxford: OUP, 1998.
- Plato, *The Dialogues of Plato*. Vol. IV. Transl. by B. Jowett. Oxford: OUP, 1931.
- Plato, *The Republic*. Transl. by A. Bloom. Basic Books, 1968.
- Russell, B. (1912) "Truth and Falsehood." In M. P. Lynch (ed.), *The Nature of Truth*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001, pp. 17-24.